

Inside Zimbabwe: Peasant Revolution

Part 1

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----- Original Message -----

To: <DEBATE@lists.kabissa.org>

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Subject: reply to Patrick Bond

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From: robsacco@zol.co.zw

Response to comments by Patrick Bond on a truncated English translation of an interview published in Portuguese in Brasil de Fato, 22 July 2004, under title: 'Another Vision of Zimbabwe'. Plus: 'Proposed Right to Land Workshop' and 'Proposed La Via Campesina Africa Conference', in Zimbabwe, April 2006.

I live, as Patrick Bond puts it so lyrically, 'way up in the gorgeous mountains on the Mocambique border at the far southeast side of Zimbabwe', where 'the ganja grows so well (and) I think cde Sacco must be getting high too much'. As a result, of the isolation of course, this debate reached me not electronically, but by hard copy through a friend. But then, as a 'rural idiot' and a peasant it could be expected that it would take me a few months to respond to academic Patrick sitting in his grimy office in downtown Johannesburg.

Patrick and I have never met, by his own admission, though he says '(I) have heard much about his Chimanimani commune'. Inaccuracy number one, Mr Bond: the Nyahode Union Learning Centre, of which I am the founding Director, is 20 years old and consists of a secondary school with 460 students; a technical college with 53 trainees; a PELUM College with 12 trainee/apprentices, a community facilitation programme working with a Smallholder Farmer Organisation (the Ruzivo Smallholder Farmer Association or RSFA) consisting of 860 sustainable homesteads organised into 34 Permaculture Clubs; and a resettlement training and support programme. NULC has 56 fulltime employees. It is an active member of PELUM

Zimbabwe, and of the PELUM Zimbabwe/ESAFF Zimbabwe Alliance, and of the PZEEZ GREEN NET Zimbabwe. Hardly 'a commune'.

Aspersions are cast at me of superficiality (based on a truncated translation of a spontaneous interview), of misrepresentation, of 'making a nuisance of myself', and of a 'reckless reconstruction', by Patrick, and by a somebody called Raj Patel.

This is a little hard to swallow for a person who has continuously been in the frontline of the struggle, even if on the fringes (the lunatic fringes?), since 1969. Where was Patrick in the dark hours? Where is he now, with his leftist critique of the ANC and of ZanuPF, assuaging his guilty conscience by barking at the heels of genuine African nationalist movements which are step by step re-Africanising the sub-continent? Following their own agenda, not his. He is not on the bus, he is most definitely off the bus, is it all he can do, trying to puncture the tyres with sharp canines?

My credentials are thrown into doubt; I am accused of 'misrepresenting myself'. It is alleged that I went 'uninvited' to the La Via Campesina International Conference, in Brazil in June 2004, where I allegedly 'made a thorough nuisance of myself around the African delegation'.

To put the record straight, Mai Elizabeth Mporu and I were formally invited to attend, by the African member of the La Via Campesina International Co-ordinating Committee (ICC), Diamantino Nhamposha of UNAC in Mozambique. Our airfares were paid, and all our expenses in Brazil were paid for the five weeks during which we not only attended the LVC Conference, but also attended the 20-year birthday celebration of the Brazilian Landless Peoples Movement, the MST.

Some of the delegates visited a land occupation by the MST, where we were buzzed by police helicopters, as well as settled land claims with functioning communities, and twice we visited and were absorbed into intense discussions at the MST Ideological College outside Sao Paulo. When the legitimacy of my attendance was raised in the ICC during the Conference, Diamantino Nhamposha said simply that it is for Africa to determine who represents it, not for Europeans to dictate who should represent Africa.

Mai Mporu and I attended as co-leaders of the formally constituted 'PELUM Zimbabwe-ESAFF Zimbabwe Alliance', an emerging smallholder farmer movement in Zimbabwe, a body which is developing rapidly, and whose documents have been formally lodged with the Government of Zimbabwe, more of which below.

While Mai Mpofu has been a communal farmer under chief Zimuto and is now a formally resettled farmer in Shashe resettlement, I have been a smallholder farmer since 1972, when my wife Liesel and I moved onto a smallholding in the Agter Paarl, some 60km from Cape Town. During the six years we were there, Liesel and I learned parenting and basic smallholder farmer skills: fence-making, milking cows and making hard cheese, farm mechanics, raising pigs and chickens and ducks, making bacon and ham and sausage, growing fruit and vegetables. And we turned the smallholding into a social centre for the seriously exploited 'dop-system' farm labour community in the area.

We had a lot of fun, but we, former student activists, were pulled into local politics, and were regularly raided by the security and other police. We were frequently hauled before the Courts in Paarl on a variety of trumped-up charges. At the same time, we conceived of and helped to set in motion the attack on the control systems of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, which attack the ANC rates as one of the most effective operations in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

From Agter Paarl, when we could not hang on any longer, we moved to a village deep in the mountains of Lesotho, 23km on foot from a base-hut we were allowed to use in a mountain village itself only reachable along a very rough 30km mountain track. A group of us, calling ourselves 'African Organic Communities', were allocated three abandoned huts at the base of the village. We were allocated a field near a stream, our contribution was to locate from elsewhere short growing season pumpkins and squashes and beans and fruit trees, which we were allowed to plant experimentally on 'our' field. Some of these varieties have become endemic to the area, bringing in a crop of beans and pumpkins before the first frost strikes. Our theory was 'development by marginal adjustment', which we practice to this day.

During a very privileged year, we were allowed to participate in a traditional African village with a people never dislodged nor defeated by the colonisers, with a surviving and dignified African peasant/feudal mode of production and exchange. We participated in traditional courts and in decision-making processes and in traditional ceremonies. We were able to witness at first hand a highly sophisticated and functional if ancient system of land use design and implementation, observing it at first hand right through a cycle of the seasons.

Unfortunately, the Lesotho Liberation Army's guerilla war against the then ruling Basotho National Party literally exploded around our heads. We had to back out, moving over the mountains to Rhodes Village in the then North Eastern Cape.

In Rhodes Village we survived with a small herd of Brown Swiss cows, hand-milking, and making a hard cheese a day, and from spinning and dyeing locally available

merino wool, arguably the best wool in the world. African Organic Communities disbanded. One member worked in a rural community in the then Transkei, got involved in a series of attacks on apartheid police stations, and landed up in Pretoria Central gaol. Another went back into Lesotho, became involved in Mkhonto we Sizwe, and went to Nordic countries for training before being deployed in Botswana and later in what is now Limpopo Province. Yet another taught in a progressive school in then Venda, before leaving South Africa for MK training in Uganda, returning later to rural activism once again in the same area.

In Rhodes Village, Liesel and I continued with our political activism, as a result of which we suffered a series of attacks co-ordinated by the Security Police based in Aliwal North, and carried out in part by the Vlakplaas Section C under Dirk Coetzee. Our cows and dogs were poisoned, our truck was fire-bombed, and eventually our home was burned to the ground. I was arrested and charged with 11 counts, and was dragged to Court, many times over. Eventually I was acquitted on 10 charges, and was given a suspended sentence for 'Defeating the ends of Justice' through obstructing the security police during a raid on our home.

Many years later, I spent a week in a small hotel room with Dirk Coetzee in Lusaka, the first of his victims to confront him, debriefing him on his activities within the infamous Section C, Vlakplaas. Not only did I hear the details of how we were attacked in Rhodes Village, I also gleaned affidavit after affidavit from Coetzee regarding the work of the South African security police and their attacks on anti-apartheid activists. These affidavits contributed to subsequent court cases, as in the murders of Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge, and in a small way to the opening up of the ugly underbelly of the apartheid regime, and to its demise. Our activism and the damage we suffered were formally acknowledged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we have received a reparations payment from the South African President's Fund in acknowledgement of that activism.

At the time, we rebuilt the house in Rhodes Village as a gesture of defiance, under constant threat to our lives, and then slipped over the border into Zimbabwe as refugees.

In Zimbabwe we, Liesel and I and our three young sons, were welcomed by the then Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Herbert Ushewokunze. We were given 5 year residence permits, on one condition: that we join the then burgeoning collective co-operative movement. Which we did, here in the Eastern Highlands, where we became members successively of Dzinganzara Collective, Ruwaka Model B Collective, and finally, Kwirire Model B Collective. Not exactly 'communes' in Bond's pejorative sense.

In 1983, I was, out of the blue, elected General Secretary of OCCZIM, the 'Organisation of Collective Co-operatives in Zimbabwe', and in 1985 I was elected National Education Secretary of OCCZIM. As such, I was thrust into the rough and tough of national politics.

OCCZIM was effectively a Zimbabwe Communist Party, with a base in the peasantry. As such, it was not formally recognized by the South African Communist Party, with its urban, workerist base. Which perspective up to now blinds the SACP to the realities of the Zimbabwean revolution: they seem unable to grasp that the transfer of 10 million hectares plus of the best land from a post-colonial class perpetually externalizing wealth, to the mass of an African peasant class, and to an African petty bourgeoisie, generating indigenous wealth from the ground up, constitutes a genuine revolution.

This peasantry and this rural petty bourgeoisie in Zimbabwe are together building national subsistence and sustainability, and are underpinning (despite the contradictions, which can be dealt with later, in a different conjuncture) a national big bourgeoisie who internalize rather than externalize wealth, enabling a defeat of the deprivation amid plenty that the world misleadingly calls 'poverty'. Which is not 'a state of being that is always with us', but which is systematic deprivation of basic rights to land and food and culture and dignity. These rights can be fought for, and won back, as Zimbabwe is struggling to prove. Without the support of the global left, who should be in there, backing the struggle tooth and claw.

Most of the 'white left' in Zimbabwe became seriously and unquestioningly critical of everything ZanuPF, seduced by people such as Jeremy and Joan and Paul and Pat Brickhill. Liesel and I, however, with our alliance to the struggle of the African peasantry, had no hesitation in going the way of the peasant, a decision which led to a degree of intellectual isolation in the 'white left'. This came to a climax in 2000: when our support for the fast-track land reform became visible, we were excluded from every single white home in Zimbabwe, a situation which has only marginally eased, as the Zimbabwean 'white left' has almost entirely slipped back into the 'white right' laager, into an uneasy and guilt-ridden allegiance to the MDC with its neo-liberal, comprador agenda.

Patrick Bond states in his diatribe that '(T)he first land invasions were not actually in 1999, but in 1980, and Mugabe smashed them, an inconvenient fact'. Once more, Mr Bond, you have got it wrong, or perhaps, you have it only half right. The Nyahode Valley, where Liesel and I have lived for the last 25 years, with one year's absence, was, yes, invaded in 1980: but that invasion was not smashed by President Mugabe, it was supported by him, an inconvenient fact indeed!

The Nyahode Valley, a fertile and well-watered area, was forcibly occupied by white settlers in phases, from 1901 to 1975. By 1980, however, most of the white farmers had left the valley, or had been buried in it. At Independence in 1980, former farm workers, forcibly moved during the war over the mountains to Smith's concentration camps, came back to the valley, where, guided by returning guerillas, they established Collectives on the former farms.

Though the farms were still 'legally' the property of white landowners, the Collectives were formally registered by the first Zanu-PF government. In 1985, President Mugabe had all the white farmers or their estates traced, and each and every one was paid out for the farms, in foreign exchange, 'willing buyer, willing seller'. The Nyahode Valley was declared a 'Model B Resettlement Area', which it remains to this day. Far from 'smashing' the occupation, President Mugabe supported it, and legalized it and formalised it. Check your 'facts', Mr Bond.

In 1985, Liesel and I and our three sons received 'Resettlement Papers'. We were allocated a patch of ground, where Liesel and I live to this day, in traditional houses in a traditional 'muusha', in a resettlement community, living largely off our own milk, cheese, butter, eggs, meat, maize, fruit and vegetables. Which we produce with our own labour, though admittedly most of the farming is done by Liesel: my continuing activism keeps me busy, in the Centre, in the Community, in the Province, in the Country, in the region, and internationally: propagating and defending and facilitating the local and global peasant struggle for land, sustainability, and dignity. It is not only ganja that grows well in these mountains: dreams too take root, the non-material becomes material through the 'creative power of consciousness'!

In 1983, the Nyahode District Union, or NDU, an OCCZIM structure, was formed. In January 1985, Liesel and I were asked by the NDU to form an adult education centre in an abandoned farmhouse in the heart of the Valley, for the young adults who had missed out on secondary schooling because of the war, and who were wandering up and down the valley, without direction. We consulted other ANC operatives, educationists who were supportive of ZanuPF, and came up with a draft Constitution for the Nyahode Union Learning Centre. This was adopted by the NDU, by the Chimanimani District Council, and by the Ministry of Education. We began work in August 1985.

Twenty years later, we are still here. As indicated above, the Centre has grown and grown, until it handles most of the post-primary learning needs in the community, and beyond. We now have two additional registrations with the State, as a Community-owned Technical College, and as a service provider to the resettlement process.

From its inception, NULC was committed to 'education with production' which led, in 1987, to my being elected the National Secretary of the ZIMFEP (Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production) Associate Member programme, thrusting me again into national politics.

In 1990, John Wilson, the founder of the renowned Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre outside Harare, conducted a 'Permaculture Land Use Design' workshop here at NULC, which led to a parallel 'Education with Permaculture' programme at NULC, and which led to NULC's contribution to the formation and emergence of PELUM Association, and of PELUM Zimbabwe, in which we have remained continually active.

John Wilson's major contribution, apart from leading the working group which founded PELUM Association, was to separate the 'ideology' of permaculture, the 'northern suburbs counter-culture substitute for religion', from the methodology of permaculture: a very useful approach to land use design, with a focus on homestead sustainability. The great discovery was how such 'permaculture methodology' in practice affirmed 'traditional land-care and animal-care practices', in contrast to the destructive chemical/industrial agriculture introduced by the colonizers, which consciously smashed traditional communities and their social, economic and ecological systems, alienating both their land and their labour.

This focus on methodologies led to the emergence of a 'toolbox of social and developmental methodologies', including permaculture land use design, watershed management, holistic decision making, Organisational Workshop community mobilisation, and more recently, organic internal control systems, etc, which methodologies emerged as the basis for the 'pelum' or 'participatory ecological land use management' approach. Another recent development is the emergence of 'endogenous excellence', a developmental and existential praxis, underlying the 'smallholder farmer culture' which is rapidly taking root in Zimbabwe following successful land re-distribution.

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in August/September 2002, PELUM Association, with assistance inter alia from PELUM Zimbabwe, organised a 'Smallholder Farmer Convergence' at Shaft 17, on the outskirts of Soweto. The climax of the Convergence was the formation of the East and Southern African Smallholder Farmer Federation, or ESAFF Region, including smallholder farmer representatives from Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa. This was witnessed by La Via Campesina, and peasant farmer representatives from all over the world.

Subsequently, national Convergences were held in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho, and ESAFF Uganda, ESAFF Kenya, ESAFF Tanzania, ESAFF Zambia, ESAFF Zimbabwe, and ESAFF Lesotho were formed, with a number of name variations (ie: ESAFF Kenya has called itself KESAFF, and MVIWATA in Tanzania absorbed the functions of ESAFF Tanzania, though the close relationship with PELUM Tanzania was maintained and developed). ESAFF Botswana and ESAFF South Africa exist only in name, if that, due to their own internal problems.

ESAFF Zimbabwe was formed at Hlekweni outside Bulawayo in November 2002, under the Chairpersonship of Mai Elizabeth Mpofu, (recently elected Chair of ESAFF Region as well) and, together with PELUM Zimbabwe, it has gone from strength to strength. PELUM Zimbabwe itself is made up of 30 Service Provider Organisations (SPOs) which train and support sustainable agriculture; while ESAFF Zimbabwe is made up of a core of some 16 Smallholder Farmer Organisations (SFOs) committed to sustainable agriculture around the country, with many more SFOs in various stages of organization.

In 2000, at the launch of the 'fast-track resettlement programme' in Zimbabwe, PELUM Zimbabwe member organisations were invited by the Government to apply for status as official service providers to the resettlement programme. After intensive discussion, a number did apply and the following were formally accredited: NULC in Chimanimani; AZTREC (Association in Zimbabwe of Traditional Environmental Conservationists) in Masvingo; MDTC (Mwenezi Development Training Centre); ZWP (Zvishavane Water Project); and FPC (Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre); and, independently, Silveira House.

Representatives of these organisations drew up a formal 'Resettlement Training Syllabus', which has provided the basis for PELUM Zimbabwe interventions in support of primarily Model A, or peasant farmer, resettlement, with a focus on Integrated Land Use Design and Watershed Management, and Enterprise Development.

Therefore, PELUM Zimbabwe members were well situated to provide back-up and assistance to emerging smallholder farmers, to ESAFF Zimbabwe, and to the PZEZ GREEN NET Zimbabwe (GNTZ), a smallholder farmer-owned wholefood production, processing and marketing network, developing a trust-based, farmer to farmer trading system.

With an average of five one-week national and representative workshops per year in 2003 and 2004 and now in 2005, an intense conversation has been established between smallholder farmers, through their emerging Smallholder Farmer

Organisations or SFOs, and the 19 rural member organisations of PELUM Zimbabwe, their Service Provider Organisations, their SPOs.

The other PELUM Zimbabwe member organisations, the urban members, to an extent following the ideological, worker/peasant split in Zimbabwe, and not having rural constituencies, are more interested in the PELUM College Zimbabwe (PCZ), which trains community facilitators. A core of PELUM Zimbabwe member organisations then are involved in both the PCZ and the PZEZ GREEN NET Zimbabwe, while others are involved in one or the other, depending on their own institutional needs and ideological positions.

Emerging from this intense conversation has been the awareness that success lies not in the SFOs and SPOs working separately, but in the two working together, the formerly landless or land deprived peasants now resettled on liveable allotments or 'pegs', and the progressive rural service providers.

Thus the smallholder farmer movement in Zimbabwe is a formal, documented, and signed alliance between involved SFOs and rural SPOs. As already indicated, it was as representatives of that emerging formal alliance that I, Chairperson of PELUM Zimbabwe, and Mai Elizabeth Mpofo, Chairperson of ESAFF Zimbabwe, were formally invited by UNAC in Mocimboa do Castelo, International Co-ordinating Committee members of La Via Campesina, to attend the meetings of LVC and MST in Brazil. Hardly muscling in uninvited.

The focus of the PZEZ Alliance is building local organisational and productive capacity at base, to achieve 'sustainable livelihoods within sustainable homesteads within sustainable communities', to build a sustainable smallholder farmer culture, with local production and value-addition. And to facilitate local markets which support the emerging PZEZ GREEN NET Zimbabwe. A conservative estimate of the smallholder farmers beginning to participate, through farmer clubs and groups, is 100 000 communal and resettlement farmers and growing. And this is not a misrepresentation!

The Directors of the PELUM Zimbabwe member organisations which were accredited to the resettlement process in 2000 became ex officio members of their District Land Committees, the bodies that carried out, and guided, the fast-track resettlement to the best of their abilities, the Zimbabwean equivalents of the revolutionary soviets. I was personally, therefore, able to see in day-to-day detail, and to some extent to influence, the land reform process from the inside from early on, and from the ground up.

There are those then, Patrick Bond among them, who deny that a genuine economic revolution, a complement to the political revolution of the 1970's, has really taken place in Zimbabwe. Their propaganda includes deriding President Mugabe as 'power-hungry', portraying the revolution as a pretence to justify his so-called 'hanging on to power'. Others, a little more subtle, deride any attempt to portray the revolution in a positive light, referring to, as Bond does: the 'starvation' created by the land reform, the 'partial crippling' of the agro-industrial sector, and of the transport and electricity sectors. And they love to focus, as Bond does, on the apparent 'rise of the new and highly dangerous class: a parasitical bourgeoisie'.

First of all, however you look at it, a major transference of a main means of production, of some ten million hectares of fertile land, has, as indicated above, really occurred in Zimbabwe over the last five years, with some 360 000 families being direct beneficiaries to land previously 'owned' by some 3 000 white farmers. This is not and has never been a gimmick, a front for any purpose, least of all for President Mugabe to 'hang on to power'.

Two policies have emerged from the Zimbabwean struggle that have not been given full attention especially by global progressives. These are the 'maximum farm size', and the 'one household, one farm' policies.

The maximum farm size policy is that to sustain any standard of livelihood it needs no more (approximately, there are variations) than 250 hectare in Natural Region 1 (fertile soils and good rains), 500ha in Natural region 2, 800ha in Natural Region 3, 1 200ha in Natural region 4, and 2 000ha in natural region 5 (low rainfall, poor soils).

Any white farmer was, is, welcome to approach the local District Land Committee, and put forward his or her case. If their request for an allocation under maximum farm size was, is, accepted, they could, can, in consultation with AREX, the organ responsible for pegging, choose their own area within the given hectareage for their Natural Region. All further land they would, do, hand over to the State for resettlement. They could, can, then apply for a 99-year lease on the land they retained, and continue with their operations.

As a member of the Chimanimani DLC, I could tell the moment a white farmer walked through the door into the DA's conference room if their application was going to succeed or not. If the farmer walked in aggressively, and talked of 'rights' and 'lawyers' and threatened Court action, the committee would not bother to listen to the details, the answer was an unambiguous 'no'. If however the farmer walked in with respect, greeted with some understanding of local culture, said they simply wanted to continue doing what they do best, and said they were happy with the maximum farm size and the one household-one farm policy: then the answer

would be 'yes', even where there were good reasons for the DLC to say no: ie: where land being asked for was leased to logging companies which treated labour roughly and with serious exploitation.

After one such meeting, I was confronted publicly, and with a lot of anger, by a local farmer who had been stripped of his land. I advised him to return to the DLC, with a different attitude. He did, his land was restored to him! But then he packed up and left Zimbabwe anyway. Two years later, in his absence, his farm was again removed from him. Who can he blame?

In mid 2002, the predominantly white 'Commercial Farmers Union' brought an action in the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe, alleging that the 'chaotic' land reform had no social or economic merit, that it was nothing other than a cover for the nefarious political ends of ZanuPF. I was summonsed to Harare, along with Cosmas Gonese, Director of AZTREC, and we were requested by the then acting Attorney General, Bharat Patel, who was defending the action on behalf of the State, to make detailed and supportative Affidavits as to our perspectives on the land reform, as involved and engaged members of civil society, interacting with the land reform at the base, at its cutting edge.

Mr Gonese stated in detail how AZTREC had negotiated successfully in a conflict situation to achieve something of a model resettlement. Before the fast-track programme, Rio Tinto mining company had bought a block of farms in the Shashe area northwest of Masvingo, to resettle people under Chief Bere, from an area, Murowa, where diamonds had been discovered in a communal area.

At the onset of fast-track, however, people under Chief Zimuto had occupied the area, as it fell traditionally under Chief Zimuto, and had been alienated by white settlers from his people and his control. AZTREC were able to assist negotiations between the Bere people and the Zimuto people and Rio Tinto and the Masvingo Provincial Land Task Force, such that both the Bere people and the Zimuto people have been successfully settled in the block of former farms, to mutual advantage.

There was no gimmick involved, and the outcome was patently beneficial to all parties. AZTREC, a key member of PELUM Zimbabwe, has subsequently established a Centre for Endogenous Development in the heart of the Shashe Resettlement Scheme, providing back-up services and basic training in land use design, watershed management, and product and enterprise development for all the settlers.

In our instance, we at NULC were able to state how we had been approached by A1 (peasant farmer) settlers to provide assistance and back-up. We showed how we had asked the communities which had approached us to choose from among their

members 'land activists', who we trained to go from omestead to homestead within the affected communities, identifying landless and land poor persons, assisting such persons to fill in the relevant 'resettlement forms'.

We showed how we then assisted the activists to ensure that all these forms were signed by the relevant Councillor and the relevant Chief, and were duly submitted to the District Land Committee. We showed how we were able to argue the settlement in the DLC, and how in one particular instance, we were part of a delegation to a much respected Chief to inform him that his traditional area, brutally stolen from his people within living memory, was being returned to his people.

We were able to show how we then provided this newly settled community with a degree of training, with ploughing of newly acquired fields, and with back-up in accessing inputs made available to them by the State. And finally, we were able to show how we supported this community in putting together a defence when the timber company, the former 'owner', challenged the acquisition in the High Court.

We were able to show how the timber company withdrew its action when they saw the community's heads of argument, knowing that they had breached the fundamental requirements for legitimate acquisition of land: they had acquired the land without the people's agreement, without compensation, with a degree of illegality, and with a degree of violence.

The NULC and the AZTREC submissions, coming from civil society, carried weight, and the judgement of the Supreme Court was that the land reform, despite difficulties and glitches and confusions and contradictions, was a genuine attempt to right deep historic wrongs.

In early 2003, I was told by a source high in Government that approximately 2 500 of the 5 000 white farmers had obtained Court actions against the resettlement of their farms from compliant Courts, and had left the country. They expected to be given their farms back by the MDC in due course, and so they funded the MDC liberally. A quarter of the white farmers were still in Zimbabwe, living in the towns and cities, still fighting their cases through the courts. While the last quarter had accepted maximum farm size and one household-one farm, and continued operations.

An immediate outcome of our involvement in the Supreme Court case was the involvement of PELUM Zimbabwe in a 'Colonial Reparations Programme'. Acting Attorney General Patel, now High Court Justice Patel, had initiated the programme, but he needed the assistance of civil society bodies to facilitate quality access to

affected communities. NULC and AZTREC and Silveira House became involved, as did a team of law students from the University of Zimbabwe, led by my second son, Solomon Sacco, a lecturer in the faculty of law at the University of Zimbabwe.

This team has accessed, and continues to access, a number of resettlement communities where the respective PELUM Zimbabwe member organisation has 'deep credibility'. The focus is on older people, who have actual memory of losing their land by force, without payment, being stripped of their cattle and their smallstock, illegally and violently. Four case studies are complete, the final one will soon be underway.

The affidavits emerging are from ten or twelve people from each community telling the same story from their individual perspectives. The stories are of recent and brutal theft of land that had provably been in the continuous possession of the affected communities for hundreds of years. These evictions are visibly illegal by any humane standard, when they are seen in their human reality. The affidavits are very personal, with the stark reality of the recent occurrence of dispossessions, their brutality, their racial blindness to basic degradation, stripping a people of their land, their animals, their livelihoods, pushing them down the valley or over the escarpment, to dry and barren land.

Dispossessed communities were left no option but to sell their labour on the new farms and estates, for almost nothing, frequently being forced to live in the most degrading of accommodation, under often brutal supervision, with a minimalist parody of a normal diet, losing a diet based in traditional biodiversity and relative plenty. This process, in its earlier stages, has been superbly documented in Charles van Onselen's 'Chibaro'.

A preliminary document produced by the legal team offers an analysis of four of the case studies, and it is clear that prior or aboriginal title may be claimed in terms of those very criteria: illegality of the dispossession in terms of the law of the day; with a degree of violence; without agreement; and without compensation.

Associated to this is the 'Right to Land: Agrarian Reform and Human Rights' process begun in the Maastricht Faculty of Law, Human Rights, 15 to 17 April 2002.

A follow-up of FOS Belgium partners involved was held a few days later in Tshipisa, Limpopo Province, 21 to 24 April 2002. This workshop resolved to convene a second international seminar of the interest groups present at Maastricht: land activists from all the global land struggles: Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, The Philippines, India, Malaysia, Kenya, and so on, including Zimbabwe; human rights

activists with an interest in land struggles; progressive funding agencies: 11.11.11., FOS, FIAN, OXFAM Belgium; CCFD Paris; and La Via Campesina.

Next meeting, to prepare for the proposed follow-up, was at Kopanong Conference Centre, Benoni, outside Johannesburg, December 9, 10 and 11, 2003. This was attended by La Via Campesina and four of the funding agencies and by FOS partners in Southern Africa, primarily PELUM Zimbabwe, ESAFF Zimbabwe, Ndima Community Services, and the Namibian National Farmers Union; by OXFAM Belgium partners, namely the South African National Land Committee and the Landless Peoples Movement; and by FIAN partners, UNAC, the National Mocambiquan Union of Peasant Farmers, the conveners for La Via Campesina for east and southern Africa.

The initial proposal was as follows: some 80 delegates, constituted as above: would fly into Harare, probably in April 2004. The 17th of April is international day of the peasant struggle for land, marking the slaughter on 17.04.96 of 16 MST land occupiers in Brasil.

The delegates would be taken to Silveira House, pending their agreement, just outside Harare, where they would be initially accommodated. The workshop would be formally opened by then Acting Attorney General Bharat Patel, after which the UZ lawyers would present their study, their methodology, the Affidavits, their analysis, all included in their draft document.

Then, a representative group from the Svosve land claim would present their history, the process by which they made their claim visible, their land occupation, the way their claim was realised by the intervention of the State, the way they were, are, now utilizing their land, controllers of their own destiny.

This would be followed by a visit by the 80 delegates to Svosve, outside Marondera, where the actual settlement could be seen, where settlers could be engaged with direct. Back at Silveira House, the delegates would be asked to add value to what they had seen and heard, based on theoretical and legal understandings, and based on their own experience as land activists and/or as academics.

Next the delegates would be driven to Chimanimani, where the same process would be followed with the resolved Hangani settlement, and with the Ngorima and Chinyai and Nyaruwa settlements, still in the process of being resolved, under a proposed 'Joint Resource Management' model.

Then the delegates would be driven to Masvingo, to Shashe at the AZTREC Centre, where a different form of resettlement resolution, as explained above, would be made visible, and once again, delegates would be able to add value.

From there, the delegates would be driven to Beit Bridge. They would cross into South Africa, and would drive the short distance to Tshipisa, where the Manenje and Mulambwane land claims would be presented, by the claimants themselves, assisted by their service provider, Ndima Community Services. Still at Tshipisa, the delegates would hear a presentation from Namibia, co-ordinated by the Namibian National Farmers Union, on the land reform in that country.

Thereafter, the delegates would return to Harare, where the whole would be discussed, learnings would be captured and recorded, and a way forward would be decided.

The one condition on this programme being carried out primarily in Zimbabwe was that delegates would realise that they were coming into Zimbabwe as guests, they would respect that, they would learn, participate and add value, but they would not use the occasion as a springboard to attack the Zimbabwe Government, or ZanuPF, or the integrity of the land reform process.

Delegates from the NLC and the LPM found this condition unacceptable, and so the offer was withdrawn.

A serious divergence of opinion became visible at Kopanong between the LPM and the NLC on one side, and Ndima Community Services and PELUM Zimbabwe and ESAFF Zimbabwe on the other. Essentially, the question was whether to work with Government in land reform, or to work outside and by implication against Government.

Recently, for instance, the NLC/LPM had launched a slogan: No Land, No Vote! in the run up to the South African General Election. And the LPM had occupied, not white-owned land, but land controlled by the South African National Defence Force. It was visible how the LPM delegates did not respond on their own, but were quietly briefed by NLC delegates before making any contribution to the meeting.

In a bid to solve an increasingly heated contradiction, the facilitator, Maria Mlotchwa, steered the meeting in the direction of a compromise: a land conference to be held in Mocambique, to be hosted, somewhat reluctantly, by UNAC. A steering committee was set up, containing the LPM, PELUM Zimbabwe, the NNFU, and UNAC. For the sake of progress, the two main protagonists of the South African contradiction, the NLC and Ndima, were deliberately left out, by collective consent.

The steering committee met in Maputo, 20-12 May 2004. The NLC pushed its way in and so once again the meeting, though it kept to a relatively even keel through the efforts of Ms Mlotchwa and Diamantino Nhampossa and Amade Suca, was nevertheless difficult, word by word, moment by moment. The elderly LPM delegate kept virtually silent throughout, except to surprise everyone at lunch, including the NLC delegate, by decal, he said, had sold out the black people en masse!

Clearly, what was being planned in Maputo was a serious compromise. Mocambique land history differs from the British colonial pattern visible in South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, so there were no real case studies to be examined in Mocambique, there were no settlements to be visited by delegates. And so the event was in danger of becoming yet another 'land conference', yet another academic talk shop.

The response of the meeting was to try to make the Mocambique event useful and memorable instead, and so it was re-designed as a Smallholder Farmers Convergence, a follow-up to the Shaft 17 Convergence that had paralleled the WSSD, this time with La Via Campesina's active presence, the beginnings of a move towards the formation of La Via Campesina Africa.

As it happened, when the write up was sent to 11.11.11, FOS Belgium, FIAN, LVC, and OXFAM Belgium, the proposed budget was considered too high, and the ball was thrown back into our court.

One outcome of the Maputo meeting was the invitation by Diamantino Nhampossa and Amade Suca of UNAC to myself and Mai Mpofu to attend the LVC International Conference in Sao Paulo, as representatives of the then in formation PELUM Zimbabwe/ESAFF Zimbabwe Alliance, which is, to repeat: a formally constituted national movement of smallholder farmers committed to the two LVC criteria: sustainable agriculture, and a critique of global neo-liberal agenda.

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Part 2

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In Sao Paulo, Mai Mpofu and I again met with delegates from the LPM. Actually, we met with two delegates from LPM and two city-based delegates from the NLC, wearing the LPM label! And yet, in the inverse racism of the day, nobody questioned their credentials, and Mai Mpofu and I also kept our peace.

Internally though, amongst ourselves, the LPM/PELUM Zimbabwe/ESAFF Zimbabwe debate continued in Sao Paulo, particularly with LPM youth chairperson, Molefe Pilane.

Molefe is himself, he says, a product of the ANC Youth, how can he treat the ANC as a political enemy? The LPM, he told us, is establishing its own identity, even though its offices are still (or then still were) physically inside the offices of the NLC. Certainly, he said, there are leftists, white and black, urban intelligentsia and academics, who were, are, trying to mould the LPM into a threat to the ANC rural base, 'a mass movement from the left'.

But this is not the basic position of the LPM, we were told. Rather, the LPM needs to move in harmony with the ANC, to represent the interests of landless and land poor people in South Africa, just as COSATU represents the interests of the urban workers with the ANC.

Molefe was open to the argument that the ANC needs to maintain and protect the economy, and needs to transfer capital from an international and comprador bourgeoisie to a national bourgeoisie, it needs to have full control of the army, the police, the intelligence services, before it can risk a major transference of land from the boers to the people. And he agreed that the ANC has the chance to learn from Zimbabwe that which works, that which does not, to design and implement therefor a programme for South Africa with contradictions and conflict minimised.

We were told that the LPM in itself is positive about the land reforms in Zimbabwe, it has no intention to criticize the Zimbabwean land struggle, nor the ZanuPF government. Yes, the position of the NLC is largely critical of both the land reform and of ZanuPF, but this is not the position of the LPM.

This has been subsequently confirmed by the LPM distancing itself from the anti-Mugabe stance of the so-called Zimbabwe Solidarity Conference after a pre-election visit to Zimbabwe March the 2nd to March the 11th this year. The LPM is quoted in the Mail and Guardian (24.03.05) as saying that the Zimbabwe land reform 'is necessary and useful', and it refused to be part of an attempt to 'de-legitimise President Mugabe's land reform programme'.

Andile Mngxitama, formerly of the NLC, now an LPM activist, is quoted in the same article as saying that '(i)n Zimbabwe there are other attempts by the poor and the excluded, and we should be listening to them as well, not just the MDC'. The word is out that the LPM is claiming its own space, separating itself from the NLC and thus the leftists attempting to use the LPM for their own political purposes.

Back in Brasil, Molefe and I drafted a motion to be put to the LVC assembly. We took it to all the African delegates to contribute or critique, we rewrote it, and gained unanimous support in the African delegates for the final draft. Molefe put it to the house, where it was unanimously adopted. The following then has been adopted as LVC policy:

'THAT La Via Campesina investigates and if appropriate subsequently recognizes the struggle validity of a radical State such as Cuba, Venezuela, Namibia and Zimbabwe, in leading a STATE-LED LAND AND TERRITORIAL REFORM that is genuinely focused on the needs and the future health and well-being of the previously landless and land poor, and that genuinely improves equitable distribution of the means of production and their proceeds; AND THAT La Via Campesina formally engages in connections with such radical State-led Land and Territorial Reform processes, and with peasant and other organisations in support of such State-led land and territorial reform'.

By the end of the Conference, the African delegates, led by Diamantino Nhampossa and Amade Suca, achieved a high degree of commonality of purpose. This is reflected in the formal document titled: 'Report Africa decisions 180604: La Via Campesina: IV International Conference: Africa region deliberations, Friday 18.06.04: Historic Decisions to Establish Five Africa La Via Campesina Sub-Regions'.

As I do not have a scanner to uplift this and related documents, it seems to be worthwhile to quote at least this key document in full:

'A small group of delegates met before breakfast to examine a way forward on the LVC by-laws and future direction, as indicated in the LVC document entitled: CONCLUSIONS OF THE STRATEGY MEETING: SYNTHESIS OF KEY QUESTIONS.

However, it was decided that a way forward was only possible if there was access to the old LVC by-laws, and to the proposed new LVC by-laws. It was decided that the concerns of the Africa group at not being given adequate materials in good time should be forwarded to the Plenary, and this was subsequently done during an Africa report back to the Plenary. This took the form of a letter to the LVC International Co-ordinating Committee, as attached.

The Africa region as a whole re-convened at 10.20am, under the Chair of Madame Toure of Cote d'Ivoire, initially in the basement room assigned to it, but then under the trees, in a far more congenial environment.

The agenda for this meeting was a discussion of the ideological orientation of La Via Campesina, and a Plan of Action, both Regional and International.

It was proposed that the meeting concentrate on organising the Africa Region, as the Conference has spent a great deal of time affirming the common ideological position of La Via Campesina member organisations.

It was proposed that BUILDING STRUCTURES is the practical way for the La Via Campesina Africa region to progress.

It has become clear that there are two levels of politics within La Via Campesina. First, there is the anti-neo-liberalism that pervades the organisation. And second, there are the internal politics of the LVC. It was understood that in order for Africa not to be marginalised by these internal politics, it needs to be organised and strong in its own right.

An immediate problem is the participation of North Africa. The delegate to the Conference from Libya has attended one or two of the meetings of the Africa region, but only for a few minutes each time. It was understood that North Africa and the Arab world are seeking recognition from the ICC as a separate Region in its own right.

It was however proposed that Africa be divided into five sub-regions: North, Central, East, West, and South; and that in time these sub-regions could become full Regions in their own right, when there are sufficient full LVC members in each such African Region.

Inasmuch as Africa at present has few full LVC members, it was proposed that we accept as Provisional LVC members those non-member organisations here present, in order that there be progress in establishing a fully fledged LVC Africa. It was also suggested that Africa be aware of possible divide and rule strategies, and it has to be united and to remain united.

The meeting approved the proposed five-part structure, and nominated the following people as the motivators for the sub-region: Southern Africa: Amade Suca, of UNAC, Mocambique West Africa: Fall Ndiakhate, of CNCR, Senegal East Africa: Daniel Wanzala, of UNFF, Uganda Central Africa: James Njengiyuimva, of IMBARAGA, Rwanda North Africa:

It was agreed that these motivators will identify smallholder farmer organisations in their sub-regions which accept the anti-neoliberalism positions of the LVC, and which are committed to sustainable, ecological agriculture, as potential LVC Africa member movements in their sub-region.

Back at home, all members and provisional members present at the meeting undertook to conscientise their own movements and organisations about La Via Campesina, so that its positions, campaigns and commissions become visible to and accepted by ordinary members in the grassroots of the organisations and movements. And then, to start forming the sub-regions, with further provisional members, those organisations and movements which meet LVC criteria.

It was decided that such movements and organisations, which have been accepted by the sub-regions, can talk on behalf of the sub-region as and where the sub-region considers it appropriate.

What is needed now, it was agreed, is a plan of action for the Africa region as a whole, and for the newly emerging African sub-regions. It was decided that a continent-wide LVC conference is needed. This will be held in Mocambique, where it will be facilitated by UNAC. The steering committee will be made up of the five sub-regional members as above, but if there are logistical problems then UNAC is empowered to co-opt people nearer to Mocambique to assist with the organisation of the Conference.

This LVC Conference will elect a Steering Committee, which will be tasked to draw up by-laws for both the Africa Region and for the sub-regions. It will be tasked to set appropriate structures, such that the campaigns and commissions of LVC can be properly organised and implemented throughout Africa.

UNAC will examine its commitments and will decide a set of dates for the LVC Africa Conference, after which it will set in motion the necessary arrangements to bring about the Conference. UNAC will be able to find some of the funding, while other organisations present will also use their contacts to help raise the necessary funding.'

This document was endorsed by the effective founders of La Via Campesina Africa: Diamantino Leopaldo Nhampossa, Amade Suca, Elizabete Afonso dos Santos, Renaldo Joao, and Obedias Barnardo Mandlate of UNAC in Mocambique; Ballo Mamadou of CTOP in Togo; Tinga Athanase Birba, of FEPA/B in Burkino Faso; Daniel Wanzala of the Uganda National Farmers Union; Mdiakhite Fall of CNCR in Senegal; Dyborn Chibonga of NASFAM in Malawi; James Nsengiyumva of IMBARAGA of Ruanda; Jean-Berthin Rabefeno of CPM in Madagascar; Joao Januario of RENAJ in Guinee Bissau; Hadijatou Sanneh of AFET in Gambia; Ibrahima Coulibaly and Marieme Sissoko of CNOP in Mali; Molefe Pilane and Rozac Kariem of the LPM in South Africa; Maureen Mnisi and Thobekile Radebe of the NLC in South Africa; Muleya Haachinda of NAPSSFZ of Zambia; Paulo Uime of UNACA in Angola; Mariame Yaya Toure of APROCACI of Cot d'Ivoire; and Elizabeth Mpofu and Rob Sacco of the PZEZ Alliance in Zimbabwe.

Despite the best of intentions, by March 2005, neither the Right to Land Workshop, nor the La Via Campesina Africa conference were yet on the map, though a meeting of the five full LVCAfrica members was held in Mali in February, sponsored by OXFAM Belgium. Accordingly, the proposals for both were discussed within the PZEZ Alliance, including with NULC, AZTREC and Silveira House, and with Justice Bharat Patel, and with Solomon Sacco.

It was agreed that we could negotiate a return to the original Right to Land proposal: the visit to five land claims in Zimbabwe, 2 land claims in South Africa, and a presentation from the NNFU on land reform in Namibia. And this could possibly be unified with the proposed LVCAfrica Conference, pending the necessary agreements, with the NNFU, UNAC, the other four full members of LVCAfrica, 11.11.11, FOS Belgium, FIAN, OXFAM Belgium, CCFD, and of course, with La Via Campesina, Honduras and Belgium. And then with the potential participating organisations and their delegates. The next 10 months can be a conversation culminating in a major event in the global and local peasant struggle for land, subsistence, and dignity.

Accordingly, a proposal has been drawn up, and is going into circulation. First step was to discuss the plan with Ndimba Community Services and the NNFU, as they would have to handle the South African and Namibian leg. Changes and developments have been and continue to be accepted, and are being factored in. At

the time of writing, Ndima has expressed its willingness to proceed on an inclusive basis, but the NNFU has not yet been engaged. UNAC has endorsed the proposed Right to Land Conference, but it is still in the process of consulting the other four LVCAfrica full members as to whether the proposed La Via Campesina Africa conference should be attached. And a go-ahead has been received from Andile Mngxitama of the LPM.

Next step is to open out the dialogue, with progressive intellectuals through this discussion page, and with the organisations and persons already included in the loop, through the Project Proposal, and through a first-call invitation letter.

The proposed dates will be, tentatively, Sunday 09.04.06 to Sunday 23.04.06, 10 months away. As suggested, the PP is already in existence: it and the invitation letter are about to be circulated to potential invitees. Silveira House and NULC and AZTREC all have adequate accommodation and meeting facilities, and Ndima Communications has access to Tshipisa Resort.

In Brussels, 11.11.11 had E 50 000 budgeted for the Right to Land follow-up, a budget we hope and trust they will revive. Otherwise, we have a number of options to find the necessary funds. Participating organisations could take on their share of the costs. Friendly progressive agencies may assist, as may La Via Campesina itself. The discussion on the funding is still wide open.

Meanwhile, Nyathi Travel Agency in Harare has been approached to assist with delegates acquiring visas and buying tickets, and with organising the busses to move the delegates from site to site during the two weeks proposed for the Workshop. They will also assist with ferrying delegates to and from the Harare International Airport.

With the proposed delegates more or less visible, with the programme in place, with the research almost complete, with the accommodation available, with visas and travel potentially in good hands, and with approval by the PZEZ Alliance, by Ndima Community Services, and by the head of the Colonial conversation, a workshop and conference, the formation of LVC Africa with a focus on the right to land.

Next step will be to bring on board 11.11.11. and FOS Belgium and FIAN and OXFAM Belgium and the CCFD, and the Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, to see if they want to participate, and to what extent they may be willing to underwrite costs. And of course, La Via Campesina, in Honduras, and their support structures in Europe, will be formally brought on board, should they be willing. At

the time of writing this, letters are about to be sent to these organisations, to solicit their responses.

Within the next two weeks, then, first call invitation letters will be going out to some 160 organisations and individuals, together with a short questionnaire to determine who and which land reform and human rights organisations should participate. First priority will go to the African organisations which were represented at the Sao Paulo LVC Conference, and to African peasant farmer and land reform movements which were present at the Right to Land seminar in Maastricht. Second priority will go to organisations involved in land and territorial struggles in South America, Asia, and Europe. Then, priority will go to progressive agencies and persons prepared to support the process, and to international legal and human rights activists and organisations and academics with an interest in land reform and in a strong local and global peasant farmer's movement.

At the end of the tour around Zimbabwe, and into South Africa, and after the wrap-up session back in Harare, if UNAC gives the go-ahead, it is proposed that the potential members of La Via Campesina Africa will meet formally in Harare. Having interacted during the workshop, having built up a common experience travelling together for two weeks, with the internal groupings more or less identified during the tour, in Harare they will debate. Under the Chair of Diamantino Nhamposha if he is agreeable, proposed by-laws for La Via Campesina Africa will be discussed, and if possible, they will be adopted. If those are successfully taken on board, the next step may be to establish a LVC Africa Co-ordinating Committee, to assist in the process of the establishment of the five African LVC sub-regions, and of LVCAfrica itself.

At the back of our minds is the possibility, floated informally in Sao Paulo, that Africa may be the venue for the Fifth International Conference of the La Via Campesina, and we do not want to be found wanting if that materialises!

I have gone to the trouble of spelling this out partly to open out the debate in good time: there is the need to be inclusive, rather than exclusive in the process; but also to counter the warped and inaccurate impression made by Patrick Bond and Raj Patel and other leftists who should know better, in their contributions to the kabissa discussion page. Such slander can be damaging if it is not opposed. And that takes me back to Patrick's diatribe against myself: a few important points remain, relating the Zimbabwean land reform, which do seem to need an answer.

Bond refers to what he calls 'the concentration of vast holdings in the hands of a very small elite group of cronies whose distortion and corruption of the process threatens to throw it into complete disrepute.'

The reality is very different. The multiple farm ownership by the elite has been made visible by a number of studies and commissions the President has himself initiated to deal with corruptions to the system. The land area concerned is no more than 200 00 hectare: some 2% of the land settled! Only the very top were able to take a whole farm for themselves, and in some instance, more than one farm. These abuses have all been tracked down, and the offenders have been ordered to normalise, to one farm-one household.

In one instance, the Minister of Justice himself was evicted from a farm in Marondera, as he has another farm in Manicaland. Two Governors were fired because they allegedly had multiple farms. A number of top officials in the Provincial Land Task Forces were fired outright for corrupt distribution of A2 settlements. At least one District Administrator was fired for corrupting the process.

There is however another dimension, unknown perhaps to Mr Bond. This involves the A2 settlements themselves, designed for trained and capable farmers with enough capital to make a success of 'commercial' farming: tobacco, fruit and vegetables, wheat, flowers, to keep agro-industry on its feet, and to keep the towns and cities fed. If all the land were in the hands of the peasants, the thinking went, they might just say, we are all right Jack!- and then who would grow food for the urban workers and other urban dwellers?

The process for designating, pegging, and allotting of A2 stands was carefully thought out. Plot size would follow maximum farm size policy, they would not be whole farms, except for the very most powerful, and they had to be dealt with by the President and his Minister of Special Affairs, then, John Nkomo, now Didymus Mutasa and Flora Bhuka.

Adverts were placed in the press for interested settlers: those with training, a bit of capital, a business and a finance plan. Many people filled the forms out in good faith, and submitted them. The forms were sent to Provincial Land Task Forces to process.

And there, as suggested above, there were problems. As it turned out, it would have been better if the processing of these applications had been done at District rather than Provincial level. Of its nature, the process favoured an elite, emerging entrepreneurs.

If a local elite, recognized as such by local people, had been awarded plum A2 settlements, this could have been locally acceptable, and where it was not, locally available mechanisms could have solved such problems. However, a provincial elite,

people unknown locally, coming into a district to take up those plums has caused resentment in some instances.

The Minister of Special Affairs was tasked to examine each and every offer letter to A2 farmers, and to wipe out anomalies. At the same time, Bharat Patel while in the AG's office set up twelve Administrative Courts in all provincial Centres (there had been two, one in Harare, one in Bulawayo) to process each and every farm formally acquired by the State for resettlement, A1 and A2.

These courts take a particular farm in their Province, one farm after the other, and they examine the process of its acquisition. They read affidavits submitted by the farmer, and they look at submissions by the State, to make sure that statutory processes have been followed: for instance, that the 'improvements' had been valued, with that evaluation signed both by the State and the farmer, and they look to see if the farmer has been recompensed, in cash or bonds, for those improvements. No payment is made for land as such.

When the Court is satisfied that the acquisition was properly done, the deeds are cancelled, and, in the instance of A2 farmers, offer letters are issued to prospective settlers. If the settlement is taken up, the settler gets a formally pegged and demarcated and identified piece of land. There are a number of new A2 settlers (perhaps 20) to a former farm, and each settler signs or will sign a 99-year lease with the State. The lease can be used as collateral to raise loans, and the State has set up many support systems for new farmers as well.

In the case of smallholder, peasant, A1 settlements, once the Administrative Court has approved the acquisition and the title deeds are cancelled, each A1 settler receives a Certificate of Occupancy to a pegged, identified plot, which certificate guarantees the rights to the piece of land in the same way as land allocated in a 'communal area', protected by the Communal Areas Act. Under these rights, settlers have security of tenure, and can only be evicted, by the Chief and with the concurrence of the elders in his Court, for blatant disloyalty to the clan; for failing to use the land; or for abusing the land.

This is a far cry from Patrick Bond's fiery allegation.

Patrick goes on: 'Another nonsense argument by Sacco is that the land reform has not caused starvation - sure it has.'

I have personally been in most corners of this country during the last five years; I have visited a number of resettlements. I have personally seen difficulties of many kinds: with the weather, with the quality of extension support, with seed

availability, with lack of markets, but I have not seen starvation. While it is true that a number of farms growing seed were acquired during the process, there is now a growing movement for the best new farmers, with a high degree of support from AREX Seed Services and the National Gene Bank, to grow and distribute seed, especially open pollinated varieties that, if kept healthy, can be replanted season after season, reducing farmer dependency on MNC seed and fertiliser companies. And, while initially many farm workers were left 'abandoned', there has been a massive programme to ensure that farm workers receive 'termination benefits', and to allow farm-workers, formerly the most exploited of all people in Zimbabwe, to acquire Zimbabwean citizenship, and thus have access to resettlement.

Perhaps Patrick does not know: it did not take many years after Independence before most of the maize crop for human food was grown by communal farmers. White farmers did not grow maize to feed black people, heavens no, they grew maize to feed their animals. Professor Sam Moyo, in the Daily Mirror (27.05.05) says that prior to land reform, 75 percent of Zimbabwe's maize was grown by smallholder farmers, and that the land reform only had a direct impact on five of the 15 major commodities produced by white commercial farmers. Cotton, a crop suited to climatically marginal areas, also rapidly passed over to communal farmers after Independence in 1980.

This means that the land reform did not in effect do much damage to the production of maize, which goes on, even if the weather has made successful crops geographically patchy. Wheat, grown largely by white farmers, is of marginal interest to the peasant, the main market for bread being in the towns. And even there, apart from the occasional shortage, there has been a constant supply of bread throughout, even if at a rapidly escalating price.

Recurrent drought is proving a problem in Southern Africa, affecting, inter alia, Malawi, Zambia, and South Africa as well as Zimbabwe. While Chiefs may be able to summon rain, there is no evidence that President Mugabe is able to keep it away, even should he wish to do so. Excessive and polluting life-styles in the North seem to be the direct cause of the global warming that is causing the droughts which adversely affect so many innocent people in the South.

And then again, the Zimbabwean State has established a Grain Marketing Board depot in every single district in the country. The State, through the GMB, buys maize from those areas which have had a surplus; it buys maize from Zambia when it has it, and from South Africa. Maize is then distributed through these depots to the people.

The people do not get it for free. They pay, we pay as we too buy our quota, at present, Z\$ 32 000 per 50kg bag, plus an amount to transport it from the depot to our locality, at present another Z\$18 000 here in the Nyahode Valley, making it an effective Z\$ 50 000 per bag, less than 10 US\$ per bag. One bag can last a nuclear family for up to two months.

Each Chief, Sub-Chief or Headman puts together lists from his or her people, and collects the money. The Chief, Sub-Chief or Headman goes to the depot with a hired truck or tractor and trailer, the sacks of maize are brought back, and distributed to all on the lists. Sometimes, as I have seen myself, local war vets hijack the process, and take over the distribution, sometimes people lose what they contributed. But this is not policy and it is not usual, the police do intervene where it becomes visible. Every Zimbabwean under a Chief has access to maize at an affordable price.

Further, employers, urban as well as rural, are also allowed to draw up lists and collect monies, to go to the depots to collect maize for distribution to their workers. Many do, and you can be sure that few of these are supporters of the Government!

The only allegations about starvation I know of have emanated from Bulawayo. These were traced back to the Bulawayo hospitals, where a number of people had indeed, it appeared, died of starvation/malnutrition.

The question is, what major third world city, what major city, does not have its share of people who have completely lost all their entitlements, who die the deaths of ultimate deprivation? These deaths were not the result of the land reform; they were unfortunates whose deaths were exploited by the MDC for shallow political purposes.

Bond goes on: '(The land reform) also rippled through the agro-industrial sector, and even the electricity and transport sectors have been partially crippled because they relied upon large scale services to white commercial farmers'.

The land reform has not crippled the agro-industry nor the electricity and transport industries. This is mere counter-revolutionary propaganda, that should not be mouthed by people like Patrick Bond.

In truth, the Zimbabwe economy has been under all-out assault during the last five years. The most pernicious is the unsung withdrawal of international finance, access to international credit lines. It is almost impossible for Zimbabwean importers or exporters to obtain finance. Local forex is artificially scarce, so they have to fall back on the parallel market: they charge high prices to recompense their risk, prices are driven up, the economy is pushed towards melt-down.

Internally, white capital externalized everything it could, from 1980 on, let there be no doubt, through the black-market, through gold and precious stones, through double-invoicing. This has risen in waves to something like a crescendo: if ZanuPF cannot be defeated politically or militarily, the thinking goes, they will be defeated economically.

Zimbabwe stands for real black economic empowerment. More than that, it stands for the political and economic liberation of all peoples rendered artificially 'poor', suffering deprivation in the midst of plenty. Along with Cuba and Venezuela it challenges the global hegemonies miscalled globalisation. Thus the determined bid to collapse the Zimbabwean revolution, as it is an example the anglo-saxon alliance simply cannot allow to succeed. If it does, if people in the South take their equitable share of their own wealth, the consequences for the conspicuous consumption of the north and their compradors is 'too ghastly to contemplate'.

Neoliberal interests control not only global finance, but also much of the media: which have been turned against President Mugabe, ZanuPF, Zimbabwe itself. I travel quite a lot, and it has been rare to find an English language newspaper anywhere without an article critical of Zimbabwe. I have collected these, pasted them up, and have put them in files: the onslaught by media is too obvious to deny or ignore.

For those who deny this co-ordinated onslaught, who see it as mere conspiracy theory, who lay all the blame for deprivation and disruption at President Mugabe's feet, let them read the American Congressional Report on Congo-Zaire, published in 1964 if I remember right, which details the way the American and Belgian governments plotted and brought about the downfall of Patrice Lumumba. The parallels are striking, to say the least.

The biggest loss has been the way otherwise anti-neoliberal people and groups and organisations have been brainwashed into a cynical and often malicious rejection of the Zimbabwe revolution. My son Solomon said to me recently: you read something once in a newspaper, you may doubt it, even reject it. By the fifth time you read it, you believe it. And this seems to apply to intellectuals, even progressive intellectuals, as well as a supposedly less critical general public.

There is more to it than that. At a trade conference in Bangkok last year, I listened with fascination to an analysis of the labour movement in Brasil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina. Urban-based industrial workers have become a labour aristocracy, defending their relatively privileged position against the rural mass, often in a de facto alliance with employers. And often in de facto opposition to rural land

movements, which are seen as disrupting the agro-industrial base and thus the stability of urban industry and thus of their secure employment.

From the perspective of radical rural struggles, this alliance of a labour aristocracy with the big bourgeoisie reads as a betrayal of the struggle as a whole, as a counter-revolutionary support of continued subjugation of rural people by the big and comprador bourgeoisie.

The South African Communist Party, with its workerist-leninist orientation, is as closely allied to COSATU as it can be: it has, it seems, neither a real understanding of deep rural revolutionary agenda, nor any wish to take these agenda properly on board.

This, in Zimbabwe, is the basis of the mentality which has consistently refused to accept any revolutionary integrity in Zanu PF, despite glaring evidence to the contrary. Instead, such people hammer away at contradictions, losing sight altogether of the whole: which despite many contradictions has without doubt really transferred a major means of production from a post-colonial class to a peasantry and an indigenous petty bourgeoisie.

Zimbabwe is more resilient than many anticipated. Our salaries and wages have been whittled down, we have been cut right back to basics, but we keep going. Zambia challenged the global big bourgeoisie when it nationalized the copper mines: but it collapsed rapidly when a fraction of the force used against Zimbabwe was applied to it. Its economy, even its beer! is now largely owned by multinationals, based, for the most part, in South Africa!

That has not happened in Zimbabwe. By mid 2003, the pressure had become enormous, for a while it felt as if the superstructure would collapse. But then President Mbeki told Bush to keep out of his backyard, the pressure diminished, Zimbabwe began to climb back onto its economic feet. Now again, after the rural electorate has so clearly, for those who will see, demonstrated its support for the land reform, we are under a desperate attack by neoliberal interests, and their witting and unwitting even unwilling allies, to bring us to our knees.

A lesser leader, a lesser party, might capitulate in the face of such a concerted counter-revolution. We have our own internal problems: ZanuPF is by no means as monolithic as many outsiders believe. But at the same time there is a core of toughened, committed revolutionary leaders inside ZanuPF, the deep African Nationalists. They are able to stave off continuous internal assaults by opportunists, they are able to weather each storm as it comes along, they are able to defend, and extend, the Zimbabwe revolution.

Which is now beginning to focus on neo-colonial systems of ownership in Zimbabwean industry, in terms of a more equitable distribution of these resources as well.

Another factor often ignored is the de facto peace and tranquillity in Zimbabwe. In five years we have had some 200 deaths related to the struggle. Some 11 white farmers have died, while in South Africa two white farmers a week have died since in 1994, nearly 2 000 so far, as witnessed by the forest of white crosses outside Polokwane in Limpopo Province.

In Zimbabwe, we have no concentration camps, no gulags. If your attitude is right, there is nowhere you cannot go in Zimbabwe. For a very short while during 2004 the youth began to harass whites at informal roadblocks outside Harare, but this was immediately brought to a halt by the President. We are safe, we feel safe, we are free, we feel free.

Bond mentions Professor Sam Moyo and 'his far more sophisticated land reform argument', which I again find insulting. Is an academic analysis necessarily more 'sophisticated' and thus more subtle, more accurate, than an analysis deriving from an activist praxis? The two forms of analysis should complement each other, not seek to deny each other. Except, perhaps, where a far-left perspective finds itself defending far-right interests?

In early 2002, if I remember right, two 'Human Rights Watch' researchers interviewed Sam Moyo. They had gone through the MDC circuit: the likes of Welshman Ncube, Pius Ncube, Paul Nyathi, and through the usual set-up interviews with workers and 'human rights activists', they had absorbed the standard position which continues to be uncritically reflected by the global media and intelligentsia. Sam told them, you need to see the other side, and he sent them to us.

The researchers were people with whom we could empathise. We gave them hospitality, we put them up, and we gave them time, long hours of discussion. We organised visits to functioning peasant farmer resettlements, and to the Chimanimani District Land Committee, providing evidence of the real revolutionary drive in the land reform, balancing the idea of a cynical political deception they had been led to believe by the MDC circuit. When they left, they took a pile of documents, and in return they gave us a bottle of whisky. That night a wild cat got into our kitchen hut, and smashed that bottle, and nothing else.

In Brussels a year later, a young, progressive reporter gave me a copy of the resulting Human Rights Watch report on Zimbabwe: it reflected the predictable

MDC perspective, but it did not even mention in a footnote, or an appendix, the visit to Chimanimani, the 'other side' which had been made visible to them.

Still later, I met Sam Moyo at the WSSD, and he told me he too had been disturbed by the omission. He had made enquiries: and had been told that the New York editors had cut that side of the report out completely, it did not fit with their pre-conceived positions. So much for the credibility of Human Rights Watch and their ilk.

In like manner, journalists I have confronted, who write for influential London papers, have told me there is no way positive stories on Zimbabwe are accepted by editors. At best, there can be a paragraph or two at the bottom of a negative story, but how many people read newspaper stories all the way?

And so, while Patrick Bond and his fellows, and people of my perspective, both consider ourselves 'left' and 'progressive', there is clearly a vast divide between a workerist alliance to an urban proletariat, a labour aristocracy, and a Maoist, if you like, alliance to a rural peasantry, and their respective revolutionary interests. Is this a beneficial, mutual contradiction, or is it necessarily antagonistic?

The debate is open. I for one look forward to engaging with progressive intellectuals, of both ideological persuasions, workerist and pro-peasant. It seems clear that participants in the Right to Land and Colonial Reparations and LVC Africa process should be pro-peasant, leaders and supporters of genuine peasant farmer movements with a commitment to sustainable agriculture and an anti-neoliberal commitment. But there may be place for a workerist critique: if it adopts a less scathing, more respectful and supportative tone, perhaps.

After all, the worker struggle and the peasant struggle are two sides of the same coin: neither is complete without the other. We have suffered tactics of divide and rule for too long: those of us who are committed to a more equitable distribution of resources, in favour of either the proletariat or the peasantry, or preferably of both, have good reason to work together, to abandon divisive intellectual and political traditions, in support of each other's struggles.

It is over to you!

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